

on it; we want to be responsive. We know that it's not the best of times for a lot of our farmers, and we want to be there for you. America is doing very well as a whole, and we think you should be part of that.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:12 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Environmental Legislation

July 23, 1998

I am pleased that the House of Representatives, in a bipartisan fashion, today rejected an unwise and unwarranted attempt to deny the American people the facts about global warming.

With much of the country suffering a stifling heat wave, and with each month so far this year setting a new record for global temperature, the American people expect and deserve a fair, honest, and informed debate on the issue of climate change. Some in Congress would have stifled that debate by effectively imposing a gag order on Federal agencies. Thankfully, the House voted to remove this language from the VA-HUD appropriations bill.

Unfortunately, the bill still contains other provisions that would restrict our ability to move forward with cost-effective steps to reduce the greenhouse gases that cause global warming. And appropriations bills moving through Congress would cut by nearly one half my proposed research and tax incentives for energy efficiency and clean energy technologies—measures that would reduce energy costs for American families while curbing greenhouse gases.

Americans have demonstrated time and again that we can protect our environment while growing our economy. We can and must meet the challenge of climate change in the same way. I urge Congress to join us in this critical endeavor.

Remarks at a Birthday Celebration for Jazz Musician Lionel Hampton

July 23, 1998

Thank you. I would say you gave a better speech for me than I played a song for you. *[Laughter]*

Let me say to Lionel Hampton and this wonderful orchestra, to all of you who are here who made this evening possible—LeVerne, thank you. Max Roach, thank you for coming. All of us who have been your fans for so long are honored to be in your presence. Thank you, Reverend Jackson. Thank you, all the Members of Congress who are here. A very, very special word of thanks to two perfectly wonderful men and fellow travelers along the road of jazz music and progressive politics—*[laughter]*—John Conyers and Charlie Rangel. Thank you for making this evening possible.

You know, Hillary and I have loved many things about the opportunity to serve here, but maybe none more than the opportunity to share with America the great gifts of our artists. And this is a special night. Lionel Hampton is 90 years old this year. You should know that he has played for every President since Harry Truman. I was minus one when Harry Truman became President—*[laughter]*—so he's been at this a day or two.

It's been a long time since he joined Louis Armstrong and gave him a hit song and revolutionized jazz music forever. I was telling Hillary when Hamp was up there playing and singing, I said, "You know, my ears are going. I can't even hear the pitch anymore, and there he is, hitting the pitch." *[Laughter]* All of you who've ever played or tried to sing, the idea that he hit the pitch is something. And they played magnificently tonight. They lifted our spirits; they lifted our hearts.

I am personally indebted to Hillary and Charlie Rangel and John Conyers for cooking this night up, and I think all of us are. And I just want to say that even though your real birthday was a few months earlier, what the heck, you only turn 90 once—*[laughter]*—we think it ought to be a year-long celebration.

So I would like to ask the White House magnificent chef who does these things for

us to bring Mr. Hampton a little gift in here. And I'd like to ask all of you to stand and join me in singing "Happy Birthday" to him.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to LeBaron Taylor, senior vice president-corporate affairs, Sony Corporation; musician Max Roach; and civil rights advocate Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Remarks to the American Legion Boys Nation

July 24, 1998

Thank you very much. Good morning. And thank you, Sheriff Riley, for that introduction and for your wonderful work for the education of our young people.

I'd like to welcome your Boys Nation director, Ron Engel; your legislative director, George Blume; your director of activities, Jack Mercier, celebrating 35 years with Boys Nation—he was here when I was here, back in the "dark ages"; your national chairman for the American Legion, Joseph Caouette; President Sladek; Vice President Rogers.

We've got a good representation for former Boys Nation people here. I know Fred Duval, my Deputy Assistant, who was in Boys Nation class of 1972, has already spoken to you. I'd also like to recognize Sean Stephenson, class of 1996, now an intern in Cabinet Affairs. Thank you for what you're doing here. And I'd like to acknowledge someone who has worked with Boys Nation year after year as long as I've been here in facilitating this event, a long, longtime friend of mine, Dan Wexler, who is leaving the White House. This is his very last event. And thank you, Mr. Wexler, for a wonderful job for the United States.

As some of you may know, a few days ago we had a reunion here at the White House for our 35th anniversary of our Boys Nation summer, and "Nightline" ran 2 nights on our reunion. I asked your president if he'd seen either one of them; he said he saw the first one, the second one he was here on duty. But I had an opportunity to meet with about half the men who were with me 35 years ago, and we were reminiscing. It was exactly 35 years ago on this day, July 24, 1963, that President Kennedy spoke to us right here in

the Rose Garden about our future. He made us believe that together we could change the world. I still believe that, and I think it is no less true for your generation. Indeed, I believe you will live in the time of greatest possibility in all human history.

Today I want to talk with you a little bit about what we have to do as a country to make the most of those possibilities, specifically about what we have to do to strengthen our education system.

When I was here, President Kennedy complimented us for supporting civil rights legislation which the Nation's Governors had declined to do. I was very proud of that because two delegates from Louisiana and I and one from Mississippi were four Southerners who broke from the pack and ensured that the legislation would pass. But I have to say that, looking back over the years, we knew then that our school systems were separate and unequal and that we never could make them what we ought to until we integrated our schools so that we could integrate our country. What we did not see then and what we know now is that equal access to public schools does not guarantee the educational excellence that should be the birthright of every American on the edge of the 21st century.

Today we enjoy a remarkable amount of peace and prosperity and security. We have the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, lowest percentage of our people on welfare in 29 years, lowest crime rate in 25 years. On October 1st we will realize the first balanced budget and surplus we have had in 29 years. We have the highest homeownership in history, and the Government has played an active role in this, but it is the smallest Government we have had in 35 years—since I was here where you are today.

Still, the world is changing fast, and it is full of challenges that we have to meet. We must build an alliance of nations, committed to freedom and human rights and to fighting against terrorism and organized crime and drug trafficking; against weapons of mass destruction, and racial, ethnic, and religious violence that bedevils so much of the world. We must build a global alliance against the global environmental and health challenges we face, including the degradation of our oceans and especially the problem of climate change.